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With a bunch of ribbons by its side,  
 And the Cork boys to be her guide.  
 Shake, shake, shake of the box,  
 All silver and no brass,  
 Up with the kettle and down with the pot,  
 Give us our answer, and let us begone.  
 Come now, mistress, shake your feathers,  
 Don't you think that we are beggars ;  
 We are the boys came here to play,  
 So give us our money and let us go away.

[As to our correspondent's request for information, reference may be made to the discussion of J. G. Frazer, in "The Golden Bough," (Lond. 1890), ii. 140 f. The custom has been prevalent in France, as well as in Great Britain and Ireland. In the Isle of Man, on Christmas Eve, the wren was hunted, killed, and fastened on the top of a pole. It was then carried from house to house, the bearers, meanwhile, chanting an appeal similar to that above given, at the same time collecting money. The wren was then laid on a bier and buried with much solemnity. The rite, according to another account, is described as taking place on St. Stephen's Day (December 26th). The bird, in the latter case, was hung in the centre of two crossing hoops, decorated with evergreen and ribbons. In the song, reference is said to have been made to boiling and eating the bird. The money collected appears to have been employed for a feast at night. English and Irish usages were substantially identical.

As to the significance of the custom, it is only clear that it must have been a survival of a sacred rite. Mr. Frazer gives Asiatic parallels, but these are not very close, nor indeed are the accounts complete or sufficient. His own conclusion is that the custom is the remains of a pastoral sacrament, in which the animal god is killed and sacramentally eaten. That the wren has in some degree a sacred character is made probable by the superstitions relating to the bird. But the whole subject is obscure.]

W. W. N.

MODERN ADDITIONS TO INDIAN MYTHS, AND INDIAN THUNDER SUPERSTITIONS. — The following remarks were made by the undersigned at the Annual Meeting, 1892 : —

1. On Mr. W. W. Newell's paper, entitled *Examples of Forgery in Folk-Lore*: (a) Some of the myths obtained from the Omahas and Ponkas bear marks of European origin, *e. g.*, one of the Orphan who had a magic sword and two magic dogs ; rescued a chief's daughter from a water monster ; cut off heads of monster, took the seven tongues home ; black man got heads, claimed chief's daughter as wife ; was detected and killed ; Orphan won chief's daughter (Contra. to N. A. Ethnology, vol. vi. pp. 108-131.) Some of the writer's Omaha informants were French half-bloods. (b) There have been modern additions made to myths. An Omaha stated that he made up part of the myth of the Big Turtle who went on the warpath. (c) When the writer was revising his material before preparing his article on "Omaha Sociology," he was furnished by one of the tribe (a

prominent ex-chief, now dead,) with several riddles, that appeared in "Omaha Sociology" as genuine Omaha riddles. Not until 1888 did he learn by accident that the riddles in question were versions of some that the children of his informant had read in "The Youth's Companion" (!) The informant was not a man to tell a wilful lie.

2. Remarks on Miss Alger's papers, one being, Survival of Fire-sacrifice among Indians in Maine: (a) When the first thunder is heard in the spring the Thunder Being is invoked by the Omaha and Ponka Indians. In the case of the former people, the Black Bear people go to the mysterious war tent of the Elk people, whom they assist in the invocation of the Thunder Being, whom they call "Grandfather." When the Black Bear people of the Ponka tribe invoke the Thunder Being on such an occasion, they say, "Ho, Grandfather, by your brandishing (your club) you are frightening us, your grandchildren, who are here. Depart on high." (b) The chief of one of the two Kansas war gentes, Pa-ha<sup>n</sup>-le ga-qli, gave the writer a copy of his mystic war chart, saying that in the middle should appear a representation of fire, but he dared not make it unless he had fasted and prayed for several days, lest he should be struck by lightning. (c) No respectable Omaha girl dare walk alone. She must go with another girl, when not accompanied by her mother or some other near relation. Any man, not a near kinsman, who spoke to young girls that he chanced to meet, was sure to be punished. (d) With reference to the *worm* killed by the Thunder, compare the Dakota belief as to the conflicts that have occurred between the Unkteqi or Water powers (the Waktceqi of the Winnebago) and the Wa-ki<sup>ya</sup> ("Flying Ones") or Thunder Beings. These water powers (the males) are supposed to dwell in rivers, while the females inhabit streams that exist beneath the hills. (e) The legend of the Moose Woman resembles two Omaha myths: In that of the Chief's Son and the Snake Woman, the latter person warns her husband against courting another woman; when he does so, she disappears. In the story of the Man who had for his wives a Buffalo Woman and a Corn Woman, the Man pursues his fleeing Buffalo wife and her son; when he reaches a river, he takes a magic plume from his hair, blows on it, and, as it is wafted across the river, he becomes the plume, reaches the other bank, overtakes his wife and son, and finally recovers them. (See "Popular Science Monthly," September, 1893.)

*J. Owen Dorsey.*

WRITING TO THE RATS. — A member of my family remembers a case of writing to the rats. It occurred in Lunenburg, Mass., perhaps fifty years ago. One day a neighbor of my grandfather's came in and triumphantly announced that at last she was going to be free of the rats; she had written to them. Her letter was as follows: "If you don't leave this house, I'll get a cat." It seems to me as amusing, in its way, as that of the Maine man. It might be called a telegram to the rats, for these were exactly her words. The proclamation was posted up, I believe, in the cellar.

*H. D. Rolfe.*

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